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512 222 combs of black honey are to be found[1], and these are generally consumed by the hunters on the spot.

The provision of the vegetable food of the community is the work of the women, who must also supply the camp with firewood and water. While the men are away hunting the 462 women, attended by the children, cut and carry the firewood, 512 and either remain in the camp making baskets or nets or other 222 objects, or else go into the forest to look for fruits and seeds. Thus by midday the camp may be quite deserted, save perhaps for one or two old men and women, and a few of the children.

In the afternoon the women return with what food they have 512 obtained and then the men come in with their provision. The 252 camp, unless the hunters have been unsuccessful, is then busy with the preparation of the evening meal, which is the chief meal of the day. If a pig has been brought home whole it is cooked at the public cooking place and is then cut up. The meat is distributed amongst the members of the community and the woman of each family then proceeds to cook the family meal. The pork, after it has been roasted and cut up, is further cooked by being boiled. The family meal is prepared at the fire that each family has in its hut. The meal is a family one, partaken [264] by a man and his wife and children. The bachelors cook and eat their own meal, and the unmarried women also eat by themselves.

512 After the meal is over, darkness having by this time fallen, the [535] men may spend an hour or two in dancing to the accompaniment 537 of a song sung by one of them with the help of a chorus of women. In that case they would probably eat another meal after the dance was over. Another favourite amusement for the evening is what may be called "yarning." A man sits down with a few listeners and tells them, with few words, and with many dramatic gestures, how he killed a pig. The same man may go on with 512 tale after tale, till, by the time he finishes he has killed twenty or thirty pigs. Finally the whole camp retires to rest and nothing

[1] There are two kinds of wild bee in the Andamans. A small species makes black honeycombs in hollow trees, and these may be found at any time of the year. A larger species of bee builds white combs suspended from the underside of branches in tall trees. Such combs are found in abundance only in the hot season, and not at all in the middle of the rainy season.

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savoury smell of the food of which they have partaken. Again, when heated by travelling or by hunting or dancing, they have recourse to the same wash, but in these cases it is applied thinly[1]."

There are here two explanations of fundamentally different character. First the Andamanese practice of painting their bodies with clay is explained as having a purely utilitarian purpose, being intended to cool them when they are heated. In the second statement the explanation given is that the custom is intended to protect them from danger.

My own observations do not altogether agree with the statements of Mr Man. I found that the natives painted themselves just as much in the cold season as in the hot season. The principal, if not the sole, occasion on which the clay is used is after or immediately before a meal, and therefore generally in the late afternoon or evening when the heat of the day is past. I do not feel so satisfied as Mr Man appears to be, that the clay really has the effect of keeping a person cool, particularly when it is remembered that the painting may consist of a few lines each as broad as a finger. Moreover, Mr Man's explanation does not afford any reason for the fact that the clay is always applied in some sort of pattern. If it were merely to keep himself cool, we should expect to see a man cover himself all over with a plain coating evenly spread over the body. Such an even coating is never used, in the Great Andaman tribes, except by persons mourning for the dead, and is the essential mark of a mourner.

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It is easy to explain how Mr Man has fallen into an error in this matter. On many occasions, when I questioned the natives as to their reason for painting themselves with clay I received the answer, "When we have eaten pork or turtle or dugong, we become *ot-kimil* and so we take clay and paint ourselves." Now the word *ot-kimil* in the *Aka-Jeru* language is the word that the natives use to express what we mean by the word "hot." But while "hot" may always be translated by *ot-kimil* or *er-kimil*, the latter word cannot always be adequately rendered in English by the word "hot." Mr Man seems to have supposed that when an Andaman Islander says "hot" he means by the word only what we mean, whereas he really means a great deal more.

[1] Man, *op. cit.* p. 333.

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Let us examine briefly the word in question. In the languages of the North Andaman the stem is *-kimil*. With the prefix *ot-* or *er-* it is used to mean "hot" as in *T'ot-kimil-bom*, "I am hot," or *Ino ot-kimil bi* or *Ino er-kimil bi*, "The water is hot." Used by itself the stem *kimil* is the name of the latter part of the rainy season, when the weather is not hot but cool. A youth or girl who is passing through the initiation ceremonies is said to be *aka-kimil*, and is addressed or spoken of as *Kimil*, instead of by his or her proper name. The turtle-eating ceremony is called *čokbi-kimil*, or *čokbi-jo*, or *kimil-jo*, *čokbi* meaning "turtle" and *jo* meaning "eating." The word "hot" is used by the natives in several unusual ways when they are talking their own language or Hindustani. Thus a stormy or rough sea is said to be "hot," and one native in describing to me (in Hindustani) the cessation of a cyclone said "the sea became cold." A person who is ill is said to be hot, and getting well is expressed by the phrase "getting cool."

In the *Aka-Bea* language the word "hot" is translated by Mr Portman by the stem *uya*. The stem *kimil* appears in the form *gumul* in only some of the uses it has in the Northern languages. *Gumul* is the name of the latter part of the rainy season. A youth passing through the initiation ceremonies is said to be *aka-gumul* and is addressed or spoken of as *Guma*. The turtle-eating ceremony is called *gumul-le-ke*, *le-ke* meaning "eating." The word thus means "the *gumul* eating" and is the literal equivalent of the *kimil-jo* of the North.

The uses of the word *kimil* may be summarised as follows:

(1) to mean "hot" in the sense of the English word;

(2) in connection with illness;

(3) in speaking of stormy weather;

(4) as the name of the latter part of the rainy season;

(5) to denote the condition of a youth or girl who is passing through or has recently passed through the initiation ceremonies, and to denote the ceremonies themselves;

(6) to denote a condition in a person consequent on eating certain foods, and perhaps sometimes due to other causes, to remedy or obviate which the natives make use of clay painted in patterns on their bodies.

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It is probable, then, that when a native says that after eating food he is *ot-limil* and therefore paints himself with clay he does not mean simply that he is hot. This will be still more evident when we consider the second explanation of the custom that is given by the natives. Many of those whom I questioned stated that after eating dugong, pork, turtle, etc., the body emits an odour, that this odour may attract the spirits of the jungle or the sea, and that to obviate this they paint themselves with clay. This agrees exactly with what Mr Man says in the second passage quoted above. It is confirmed by other customs. I was told that a man who has eaten dugong will not leave the camp until some time after the dugong meat is all finished, for fear that the spirits may smell him and do him harm. It is to be noted in passing that painting the body with clay does not by any means remove the odour that does actually characterise a native after he has been eating fat meat of any kind. We must be careful, in this instance also, not to assume that an Andaman Islander means by "smell" exactly what we mean by it and nothing more. It will be shown later in the chapter that the Andamanese identify the smell of an object with its active magical principle. One example may be given here to show this. The origin of rheumatism in the legs is explained by the natives as being the result of the common practice of preparing the fibre of the *Anadendron paniculatum* by scraping it on the thigh. During this process, they say, the "smell" of the plant enters the thigh and is the cause of rheumatic or sciatic pains.

The natives give yet a third statement of their reasons for using clay. On many occasions I asked them what would happen if they ate pork or turtle and did not paint themselves. In every case I received the reply that any man who did such a thing would almost certainly be ill.

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When a number of persons give three different reasons for one and the same action, and are equally sincere throughout, it is to be presumed that the three different statements are so many different ways of saying one and the same thing. We may therefore conclude that the Andaman Islanders believe that there is a peculiar power in foods (or in some foods) which makes it dangerous to eat them. This danger may be expressed by saying that

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the person who has eaten food will, unless he takes certain precautions, be liable to be ill. Now sickness is believed to be caused by the spirits of the jungle and the sea, and therefore an alternative or equivalent statement of the same belief is that after a person has eaten food he is in danger from the spirits. We may therefore conclude that the word *ot-kimil*, when it is used to describe the condition of a person who has eaten food, denotes simply this condition of danger, and nothing more. For this we shall find ample confirmation later on. Subject to such later confirmation I will here state what has been maintained, which is (1) that the *era-puli* patterns are to be explained as being protective, (2) that the eating of food is regarded as dangerous, and (3) that this danger is associated in the minds of the natives with sickness and with the spirits. It will be convenient to leave the first of these three propositions for later discussion and take up the second, seeking to find the meaning of this belief in the dangerous properties of food.

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Not all foods are equally dangerous. I was able to establish roughly a sort of scale. The most dangerous foods are dugong; the fish called *komar*; some of the snakes; the internal fat such as the kidney-fat or the intestinal fat of pig, turtle, monitor lizard and *Paradoxurus*; the liver of sharks, sting-rays and *Plotosus*; and honey. Next in order come the flesh of pigs, turtle, monitor lizard and *Paradoxurus* and of the fishes mentioned above; also the eggs of turtle. To these should perhaps be added the edible grubs and some vegetable foods such as the yams and the *Artocarpus* fruit and seed. Lowest in the scale, that is, least dangerous, are molluscs and the commoner sorts of fish and vegetable foods.

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The principles underlying this grading of foods are two. Those foods that are difficult or dangerous to procure are considered more dangerous than others. Thus all the fishes that are thought most dangerous to eat are actually dangerous, such as the sharks, the sting-rays, the armed *Plotosus*, and the fish *komar* that has a powerful spike on its head with which it can inflict a dangerous wound. Secondly the foods that are most prized are regarded as being more dangerous than those that are less prized. The internal fat of animals is regarded as a great delicacy and therefore occupies a high place in the scale. It is this also that explains

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to protect them from danger and to bring them luck, is therefore very similar to their belief in the protective power of the materials used for weapons and implements. The consideration of the apparent contradiction mentioned above has led us to a more exact statement of the real beliefs in these matters. They believe, we may say, that all the things from the jungle and the sea of which they make use as food or as materials, are dangerous unless approached with proper ritual precautions, but when so approached they become sources of strength and well-being and also of protection from unseen dangers.

To return to the main argument, which was concerned with the meaning of the patterns of clay painted on the body after eating the more dangerous foods, it would seem that this action is really a rite or ceremony, of the same general character as other ceremonial customs of the Andamans. It is an action required by custom, the performance of which on appropriate occasions serves to keep alive in the mind of the individual a certain system of sentiments necessary for the regulation of conduct in conformity to the needs of the society. By it the individual is made to feel (or to act as though he felt) that his life is one of continually repeated dangers from which he can only be preserved by conforming to the customs of the society as they have been handed down by tradition. He is made to feel that the eating of food is not merely the satisfaction of an animal appetite, but an act of communion, that the food itself is something "sacred" (if we may use that word in the sense of the original Latin "sacer"). It serves also, like any other rite in which all join, to make the individual feel the solidarity and unity of the community; all share in the common repast and the common danger, and each man sees on his neighbour the clay with which he himself is daubed.

Of course it is probable that the Andamanese custom of painting the body after eating, like our own grace before and after meat, with which it is parallel, tends to become a formality accompanied by little real feeling, but it can be shown, I believe, that such customs do possess a real value—a real psychological function—in keeping alive ideas and sentiments that will on occasion play an important part in influencing conduct.

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able, for not only are no precautions taken for their preservation, but they are used roughly, small bones being broken by them, and food commonly eaten at almost boiling point. The grinding surface of the molars is generally much abraded: five or six tubercles are occasionally observed in the posterior molars, but are not all marked with equal distinctness; in some cases, indeed, they are scarcely distinguishable. The crowns of these teeth frequently present one long and comparatively even surface, and the peculiarity is of course due to the practice above referred to, of grinding hard substances with them. The canines are not longer or more prominent than the other teeth; caries appear to be rare, except with those well advanced in years. The front teeth of the lower jaw are generally the first cut: the first dentition is completed apparently at an earlier age than is usual among ourselves.

Hair.—1. Dr. Allen Thomson, F.R.S., who has kindly examined some of the hair microscopically, gives it as his opinion that the form of the transverse section is *oval*. Having, however, only a small quantity at his disposal, he has not been able to make a sufficient examination as yet, so he adds that, "it may be that some sections are oblique, but a number are certainly transverse, and none of them have a circular outline." In appearance it is extremely frizzly and seems to grow in spiral tufts,[1] but examination proves that the roots are uniformly distributed over the scalp: it is fine in texture and fairly abundant, but lustreless, and seldom more than two or three inches long, or five inches if the actual length when untwisted be measured; in a few instances it has been found to be eight or ten inches long, but the ends were matted, dead-like, and easily broken.

2. The majority of the women every week or ten days shave their heads almost entirely, leaving only two narrow parallel lines of hair, termed *gôr-*, from the crown to the nape of the neck. The *gôr-* is never allowed to exceed one-eighth of an inch in length; therefore, as they have no means of clipping it, it is constantly shaven off, and a fresh *gôr-* is made with the hair which has grown since the last operation.[2]

[1] Just ten years ago it was pointed out by Dr. J. Barnard Davis, F.R.S., that the delicate ribbon-like hair of these islanders is exactly similar to that of the now extinct race of Tasmanians ("Journ. Anthrop. Inst.," vol. ii. p. 100).

[2] I would here call attention to some errors of the artist by whom Dr. Mouat's book was illustrated. He has represented the men as shaven and the women with their curly wigs intact, whereas it is the latter only who as a rule shave their heads; and they do not go about entirely nude, but wear leaves, as will be explained in another place (*vide post* "Psychology and Morals," paragraph 8, and "Attire," paragraph 3). They are further incorrectly represented in the same plate as using a gipsy's tripod for cooking purposes.

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their encampment when the phenomenon occurs, they invariably secrete themselves, at the bottom of a boat, for example, if fishing, and remain silent for a short time before venturing to resume ther interrupted employment. 776 821

5. Betwen dawn and sunrise they will do no work, save what is noiseless,lest the sun should be offended, and cause an eclipse, storm, or other misfortune to overtake them. If, therefore, they have occasn to start on a journey or hunting expedition at so early an hur, they proceed as quietly as possible, and refrain from the practice observed at other periods of the day, of testing the strengt of their bow-strings, as the snapping noise caused thereby is one of those to which the sun objects. 784 821

6. They nvariably partake of a meal soon after rising, as it is believed tht no luck can attend any one who starts to his day's work on anempty stomach. 777 264

7. They lare not use the wood of the tree called *al·aba-* (the bark of which supplies the fibre used in making harpoon lines and turtle nets) for cooking turtle, for, as will be found elsewhere,[1] thi is an act so abhorrent to *mara ·ōgar-* that he visits the offendes with summary and condign punishment. 776

8. In tempestuous weather the leaves of the *Mimusops Indica* are constanly thrown on the fires, as the popping sounds thus produced ae thought to have the effect of assuaging *Pū·luga-*'s fury and causing the weather to moderate. 821 776 [789]

9. When they see a dark cloud approaching at a time when rain would prove very inconvenient, as when hunting, travelling, &c., they advise *Pū·luga-* to divert its course by shouting "*.wâ·ra-jō·lo kō·pkekō·pke, kō·pke*" [*Wā·ra-jōbo*[2] will bite, bite, bite (you)]. If in spite of this a shower falls they imagine that *Pū·luga-* is undeterredby their warning.

10. This practice of menacing *Pū·luga-* is probably that to which Colonel Symes alluded when he wrote that "they confess the influene of a malignant Being, and, during the south-west monsoon, when tempests prevail with unusual violence, they deprecate his wrath by wild choruses."

11. Storms are regarded as indications of *Pū·luga-*'s anger; winds are his breath, and are caused to be blown by his will; when it thunders *Pū·luga-* is said to be growling at something which has annoyed him; and lightning, they say, is a burning log flung by him at he object of his wrath.

12. Ther is an idea current that if during the first half of the rainy season they eat the *Caryota sobolifera*, or pluck and eat the seeds o the *Entada pursætha*, or gather yams or other edible 821 776 262

[1] *Vide post*: "Mythology," paragraph 32.

[2] This snake, as already mentioned under "Medicine," appears to be the *Ophiophagus-laps*.

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such, not because they find any difficulty in procuring other food.[1]

3. Both *dryô to-* and *ē'rem-tâ'ga-* find ample[2] provisions for their simple wants in their immediate surroundings, without exerting themselves to any great extent, and their eagerness in the chase is induced almost as much by actual love of sport as by the necessity of obtaining food: were this not the case they would hardly be found spending so much time in dancing and singing, in personal decorations, and in the preparation of their meals, while they reject with aversion anything that has become at all tainted. Further, it may be fairly estimated that one-third of the food daily consumed by them consists of edible roots, fruits, and honey, and the remaining portion of the flesh of one or more of the following, viz.: pig, paradoxurus,[3] iguana, turtle, fish, and molluscs, with rare additions of pigeons and jungle fowls;[4] Flying-foxes, bats, rats, s[illegible]- (not land-) snakes, the larvæ of the Great Capricornis beetle (*Cerambyx heros*) called *ôi'yum-*,[5] as well as two other insects, called *bū'tu-* and *pī'rigi-*,[6] are, it is true, also eaten, but they are partaken of by way of variety, and the latter are regarded as luxuries (*â'kà-râ'rnga-*, tid-bits) to supplement (not substitute) other fare.[7]

4. The Andamanese are nominally content with two meals a day, viz.: breakfast (*â'kà-nâ'-*) and a heavy supper (*â'kan-go'lajnga-*) after sun-down; they will, however, often help themselves to small quantities of food from time to time in the course of the day when engaged on any work; and, when leaving on a

[1] "It cannot be wondered at that these savages love the unfettered life of their own wild jungles, where their simple wants are easily supplied—a lean-to serving them for quarters, and food such as they are accustomed to being found in great abundance. Nothing comes amiss to an Andamanese maw; roots, wild fruits, berries, crabs, clams, fish, wild pigs, and turtle are all ravenously devoured, and a glance at the well-nourished bodies of men, women, and children amply convinces one that they do not starve" (*vide* "Bombay Gazette," 2nd August, 1881: "The Andamans, our Indian Penal Settlement;" *vide* also paper by Professor Owen, F.R.S., "On the Psychical and Physical Characteristics of the Mincopies," Report of British Association, 1861, p. 216.)

[2] *Vide* "Tribal Communities," paragraph 2, and Appendix F (*Wō'i's* statement).

[3] It is presumed that Dr. Day refers to this animal when he states that "they eat cats," for they do not appear ever to have had any fancy for the flesh of *pûchi*, the name they have adopted for the domestic cat, from the English "pussy."

[4] *Vide* "Tabu," paragraph 2 (footnote).

[5] Probably the "fat grub, about three or four inches long, much relished by the natives" (Australians), mentioned by Mr. H. W. Bates, in his "Illustrated Travels," is identical with the *ôi'yum-*.

[6] The *bū'tu-* is found in rotten logs of jungle trees, especially the *Dipterocarpus lævis* (*â'rain-*), *Gluta longipetiolata* (*já-*), and *Chickrassia tabularis* (*ô'ro-*).

[7] Their fancy for grubs does not extend to the *Teredo navalis*.

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264 day's hunt, they usually provide themselves with some fire and a *gōb-*[1] of food, which they warm up and enjoy about midday:[2] no difference is made between the sexes, but all fare alike.

261 5. The average amount eaten by an Andamanese adult appears to exceed that of a native of India, and to average three or four pounds daily, while, like many other savages, after a successful hunt, or on some special occasion, when dancing is carried on through the entire night,[3] the consumption of food is surprising, and has, in some instances, been estimated at upwards of ten pounds of pork, or turtle, in the twenty-four hours, helped out by mouthfuls of some one or more of the delicacies above enumerated.[4]

264 6. As may be assumed from foregoing sections, caste distinctions are unknown; while, however, all members of a family take their meals together, a married man is only permitted to eat with other Benedicts and bachelors, but never with any women save those of his own household, unless indeed he be well advanced in years. Bachelors as well as spinsters are required to take their meals apart with those of their respective sexes.

7. Their mode of eating meat is to cram a large piece into the mouth, and then to cut off whatever is in excess[5] with a bamboo or cane (now-a-days generally a steel) knife. The same custom, carried to a more disgusting extreme, is found among 271 the Esquimaux.[6] Speaking generally of the Andamanese it may be said that water is their only beverage, for though the aborigines in the vicinity of Port Blair have acquired a strong liking for rum, &c., they have not been permitted to gratify it; if very thirsty while on a fishing expedition, and all the fresh water supply be exhausted[7] the *dryô·to-* pour water over their

[1] *Vide* Appendix B, item 82.

[2] This applies to the meat of the turtle, pig, iguana, and paradoxurus; the remains of a feast of fish, shell-fish, and prawns are not warmed up a second time; a further distinction is made in the case of turtles' eggs, the three insects mentioned in paragraph 3, edible roots, and such fruits as are cooked (*vide post* paragraph 19), for these are left to cool before they are eaten.

[3] *Vide* "Games and Amusements," paragraphs 21 and 22.

[4] *Bêche de mer* and edible birds'-nests, so highly esteemed by some, and of which large supplies are obtainable along their coasts, are not regarded by the Andamanese as fit for food. [262]

[5] For the following note, which refers to a similar practice among the Napo-Indians of South America, I am indebted to Mr. W. L. Distant:—"In eating meat (usually monkey, sea-cow, and peccari) we observed that they did not tear or bite it, but, putting one end of a long piece in the mouth, cut off what they could not get in, as Darwin noticed among the Fuegians" (Jas. Orton: "Andes and the Amazon," p. 168).

[6] *Vide* Lubbock's "Prehistoric Times," p. 486.

[7] They will now-a-days occasionally assuage their thirst, when away from home, by cutting off a piece of ground rattan (*bōl-*); this practice is only known to the people of South Andaman, and has been borrowed from the Burmese convicts.

881 and pointing to a limited tabu. On reaching puberty or thereabouts, between 12 and 16 years of age, abstention from about 6 kinds of food, each in turn, is voluntarily commenced and continued for some years. At the end of each abstention there are a few ceremonies and some dancing and the youth of both sexes become "grown up." There is nothing else to mark this period beyond the application of an honorific name while it lasts, no secret to be communicated, no religious ceremony. In after-life, however, men who have gone through the initiatory period together will not fight, quarrel, nor call each other by name. They will assume great friendship, while avoiding each other with a mutual shyness. The women also practise a limited tabu as to food during menstruation and pregnancy. The idea of tabu does undoubtedly exist as to food and every man has his own tabued articles through life, which is, however, usually something observed to disagree with him in childhood or to be unpalatable.

●264 576 There are also limitations as to sexual family relations. Only husband and wife can eat together. Widows and widowers, bachelors and maidens eat with their own sex only. A man may not address directly a married woman younger than himself or touch his wife's sister or the wife of a younger relative, and *vice versâ*.

302 304 The tattooing is partly ceremonial, as a test of courage and endurance of pain, and so is painting the body with clays, oils, etc. By the material and design is shown sickness, sorrow or festivity and the unmarried condition.

535 **Amusements.**—The great amusement of the Andamanese, indeed their chief object in life after the chase, is the formal evening or night dance, a curious monotonous performance accompanied by drumming the feet rythmically on a special sounding board, like a Crusader's shield and mistaken for a shield by several observers, singing a song more or less impromptu and of a compass limited to four semitones and the intermediate quarter tones, and clapping the hands on the thighs in unison. The dance takes place every evening whenever there are enough for it, and lasts for hours and all night at meetings of the tribes or septs for the purpose. It then becomes ceremonial and is continued for several nights in succession. Both sexes take allotted parts in it. This and turtle hunting are the only things which will keep the Andamanese awake all night long. There are five varieties of the dance among the tribes: that of the Ónge-Jarawas being an entirely separate performance.

533 **Music.**—The Andamanese appreciate rhythm and time, but not pitch or tune. They sing in unison, but not in parts, and can neither sing in chorus nor repeat or even catch an air. The key in which a solo or chorus is started is quite accidental. They can be readily taught any dance step and can teach it themselves from observation.

Song.—Every man who respects himself is a composer of songs, always consisting of a solo and refrain, and sings without action or gesticulation and always to the same rhythm. The songs relate only to travel, sport and personal adventures, never to love, children and the usual objects of poetry, and very rarely to beliefs and superstition. The wording is enigmatic and excessively elliptic, the words themselves being in grammatical order, but shorn of all affixes as a rule. As in all poetry unusual words are employed. But clipped as the wording is and prosaic as the subjects are, the Andamanese are far from being unable to give a poetic turn to their phraseology and ideas. The women have lullabies for their babies.

524 **Games.**—The Andamanese are childishly fond of games and have an indigenous blind-man's-buff, leap-frog and hide-and-seek. Mock pig and turtle hunts, mock burials, and "ghost" hunts are favourite sports. Matches in swinging, swimming, throwing, skimming (ducks and drakes), shooting (archery), and wrestling are practised.

551 **Naming of Children and Adults.**—Every child is named for life after one of about twenty conventional names by the mother, of course without reference to sex, immediately upon pregnancy becoming evident, to which afterwards a nickname, varying occasionally as life proceeds, is added from personal peculiarities, deformities, disfigurements, or eccentricities and sometimes from flattery or reverence. Girls are also given "flower names" after one of sixteen selected trees which happen to be in flower at the time they reach puberty.

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tracted hardship and considerable risk, not so much from the natives themselves as from the implacable Andaman sea. We had a terrible time during several of our landings from the open Indian Ocean. Constant danger additionally stimulated the development of research in Little Andaman. All the Indians and the Burmese behaved bravely. Among them I wish to mention here my Indian stenographer, a married man nearing thirty, from Bengal: RANHADIR KUMAR DEY, who, on 12 and 13 February, 1953, on the south coast of the island shared two frightfully narrow escapes with me. I am sure that neither of us will ever forget it. I later found a comfortable landing place, now indicated by floating buoys, on the north coast. Two other Bengalese assistants who were a great help to me in Little Andaman and had been selected from a number of young aspirants, are PRONAB GANGULI and BIMAL CHANDRA ROY. My work in the Andamans could not have been accomplished without them and without the initiative and encouragement of officers such as Dr. B. S. GUHA, Director of the Department of Anthropology of the Indian Government, Mr. AJAY K. GHOSH, the kind, open-minded Chief Commissioner of Andamans and Nicobars during my 1951-1953 stay there, and Mr. S. N. MAITRA, who succeeded Mr. GHOSH as Chief Commissioner. In a book that I am writing I try to point out the significance of my work in the Andamans, carried out with the help of such distinguished, and sometimes heroic, Indian collaborators.

I. Hygienic Conditions

1. Habitation

The nomadic Onge have two kinds of shelter: one temporary, the other permanent, used only for short periods at a time. The Little Andaman forest is full of abandoned temporary shelters; the permanent camps are fewer, mainly situated along the coast. They consist of communal huts, strongly built by a number of families roaming under the direction of a leader. The huts have a ritual significance, as we shall presently see. Inside each communal hut are a number of beds generally equal to the number of families. Small fires are kept burning day and night near the beds, a precaution that I was thankful for on many cold nights succeeded by hot days. The Onge require nothing more against the cold. In their camps they can withstand the heaviest storms and drenching rains. In order to avoid chills it is enough for them to protect their fires from extinction. This applied to me too, while living among the Onge. The warmth and the dry air ensured good health for us all.

A few additional beds are for the use of bachelors nearing marriage. Most of the beds are marginally and radially placed; a few are placed transversally. Normal beds accommodate father, mother (the Onge are monogamous), children and dogs, all in a heap. In temporary as in permanent shelters it is customary for families to eat separately, each close to its bed. The low, round roof of the communal hut does not reach the ground; a gap of 30 cms is left free for creeping in and out at will without using the main door (a simple mat to be lifted). Rubbish is thrown carelessly everywhere, e. g. directly outside the circular hut, which is consequently surrounded by a malodorous ring of bones, imperfectly cleaned shells, bits of rotting shellfish and other animals – a rich breeding ground for flies and various other insects that rapidly destroy everything edible, leaving the grass to grow until the next lot of garbage accumulates. Building and rebuilding a communal hut always on the same

515 [147] people. Furthermore, the Onge skin is very soft and more elastic than is usual in human beings. For us, clothed and with a less resilient skin, a trip through the thorny Andaman forest means many small, bleeding scratches. Not so for the naked Onge. – To cover them with clothes would endanger their health. Nakedness inures them to the sudden changes of temperature so frequent in [513] Little Andaman and preserves them from catching cold when sleeping, uncovered, on their rough, unprotected bed of boughs. As with primitives all over the world, clothes make them miserable and, I may add, very ungainly and dirty.

515 [413] Part of their general negligence with regard to hygiene is their carelessness about their teeth. They never clean them. They do keep bamboo sticks, 1 mm thick and 8 cms long, tucked into their hair to be ostensibly used as toothpicks ; but the sticks, to tell the truth, are more of an ornament than a tool.

142 [164] The Onge's teeth are so compact and sound that there is no space between them for food particles to collect. No caries or decay of any sort are to be noticed. In a number of skeletons that I dug up from under the beds in communal huts, the teeth gave evidence of one peculiarity : old people had worn them down to the root. The Onge habit of using teeth as working instruments, [289] to prepare fibre for ropes and in many other circumstances – apart from their permanent chewing on hard foodstuffs – explains this fact.

515 As a consequence of never washing, the natives' hands are sometimes extremely dirty. The Onge themselves are conscious of this. I shall give an

226 instance. It so happened that I arrived in Nachugé, on the west coast, toward the end of March, when the sea was teeming with migrating sardines. In Little Andaman sardines can weigh up to a pound ; but a normal catch, obtained with small hand-nets cast from canoes among shoals of fish imprisoned by the low tide within the coral reef that surrounds the island, contains specimens of [264] every dimension. All are eaten as soon as possible. The quantity of fish brought back to the camps on such occasions puts all inmates to work and induces everybody to abandon all other occupations for the time being. In the low tidal waters the men push their canoes from rock to rock, using them as receptacles for the abundant food so easily collected. In some "pockets" nets prove unnecessary : the fish is gathered in handfuls and rapidly thrown into the canoes. The hecatomb ends when the canoes are filled to the gunwales. In no other part of the world have I seem food made available to primitive people in such large quantities and with so little effort.

252 Back at the camp, the sardines are "graded" according to size and cooked immediately. They are not washed or cleaned, the inner organs are eaten together with the flesh. Men, women and children feverishly take part in the [263] cooking ; the fish is boiled without salt. All the natives then plunge their hands 264 avidly into the heap of sardines. From time to time the women clean their 515 hands by rubbing them on the *naqnuŋghi*. Very soon this garment becomes [231] extremely smelly. Men and children clean their hands in a different way : by rubbing them on the dogs. On such occasions, everything and everybody smells of fish for days and days. The first to become clean again are the dogs, because they hate to be smeared with fish and wash themselves in the sea as soon as they have a chance.

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3. Food

In the absence of men, women also are good at fishing inside the coral reefs. They do this with two small nets used together. Their catch generally consists of brilliantly coloured fish with yellow, red, green, blue, black and white stripes forming varied and attractive designs. The Onge eat all fish without discrimination. My Indian collaborators, on the other hand, considered the coloured fish dangerous to their health and refused to cook them; the Sacred Vedas, in fact, advise the avoidance of brightly hued fish and of fish without scales. I wanted to try both kinds, and found them perfectly palatable, tasty and harmless.

No tool, used for any purpose by the Onge, ever gets a cleaning. Cleanliness, I repeat, is unknown in Little Andaman. See how food is prepared and disposed of! Care is taken only not to throw big pieces of meat intended for cooking directly on the bare ground; but once it is cooked, food is treated with the utmost disregard for dirt, dust, cobwebs and other such things. It is usually left lying around on large leaves spread out for the purpose. The remains of the Onge's orgiastic meals are kept out of reach of the dogs on the ceiling of the huts, to be covered with flies when no fire is lit directly below. Sand and grit may get wedged annoyingly in the teeth, but not such impalpable things as dust or cobwebs. The use of unclean food is not repugnant to the Onge. The same can be said for water polluted by dogs drinking and bathing in it, or by the presence of putrefying carcases. In the west of Little Andaman I saw some Onge avidly drinking from pools of a blackish water with a revolting sulphurous smell. After thoroughly filtering and boiling it, I too used such water, for it was the only water available in the neighborhood. This caused no ill effects. My Indian men considered it perfectly healthy and invigorating, and drank it safely in its natural condition.

The Onge eat with their unwashed fingers, without the help of tools. On rare occasions they use platters made of the flattened-out stems – or bracts – of *areca* palms. They sometimes carry these platters when travelling, but of course never wash them although they become coated in rancid, greasy filth. They soon assume a dark colour and a truly revolting appearance – aside from the awful smell. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's statement – that the Andamanese paint their bodies to neutralize the unpleasant smell of food that clings to them after their orgiastic feedings – shows only indirect knowledge of the life and manners of those people. Even the horrible flatulence that follows their pork orgies is not considered an inconvenience; yet it is much more revolting than all the other body odours.

Although the Onge observe few hygienic precautions they do follow a number of medical practices, not all devoid of beneficial effects. Here are a few more remarks on their eating and drinking habits. For about six months of the year, between November and April, water is scarce in Little Andaman. Every kind of fresh water is then considered good by the Onge, regardless of whether it is a murky infusion of rotting leaves or afloat with the putrefied

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
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caracases of small animals. During the droughts, marine hermit crabs, of which a profusion is found in Little Andaman even far from the sea-shore, often choose to die in fresh-water pools. They are not removed from the pools. A nautilus shell is sometimes used as a drinking vessel ; failing this, the Onge lap up the water like animals, on all fours, directly from the pool. Since they are very fond of dogs, man and dog drink together from the same tiny pool, often holding no more than a few pints of water. Dogs reached Great Andaman as early as 1857 ; they came to Little Andaman much later. Before that time there were no dogs in the Andamanese Archipelago. They soon became the natives' cherished and much appreciated assistants in the hunting of wild pigs. Many unhygienic habits followed the appearance of dogs in the Andamans.

The Onge have no idea of boiling water for the purpose of disinfection ; nevertheless their health does not appear to suffer at all as a result of the polluted water they drink. When, in 1952, I dug a well near the left bank of Dugong Creek on the north-east coast of Little Andaman, I was compelled to fence it in so as to prevent dogs from drinking it and bathing in it.

Dogs lick everything that smells of food, including the cooking pots, and the pots are not washed before use after the dogs have licked them. Swarms of flies of different species and small coleoptera of a brilliant blue colour, one of them 6 mms long, follow the dogs after they have "cleaned" the pots by licking them. They line the inside of the pots with a crawling, living coat, moving restlessly around in search of food. One species of fly, which is of a brilliant, metallic green colour, has a peculiarly disagreeable smell. All the flies lay eggs while feeding, but the eggs are soon devoured by the hovering bluish coleoptera. Thus in a few hours all traces of organic matter disappear from the pots. Subsequent exposure to fire undoubtedly destroys the germs that would otherwise be certainly dangerous to human beings.

The Onge no longer use indigenous pottery for cooking. Its disappearance is recent, as the sherds that litter Little Andaman prove to the investigator. Excavation in modern kitchen-middens leads to the same conclusion. During the last war, quantities of empty petrol drums were washed up on the Andaman shores. They were found in such numbers that the Onge have not yet used them all up : after 1952 I found several of these containers abandoned, untouched, in the jungle. The primitive inhabitants sawed each container in two cylindrical halves, thus transforming them into cooking pots. The result was that within a few years the fragile ancestral pottery of the Onge disappeared altogether. Furthermore, aluminium pots were distributed among the natives after 1952. Probably the indigenous pottery will never again reappear. Each half of a petrol drum is large enough to contain a pig, or a turtle weighing 150 lbs, cut into pieces. Only the flesh of these animals is consumed by the Onge ; the nourishing broth is poured out onto the ground or left in the pot to be lapped up by the dogs. The Onge believe that broth is unhealthy and avoid drinking it.

No matter how prodigious the catch of sardines or other fish, unobtainable at other times of the year, no attempt is made at storing part of it in view of future shortage. The Onge are unacquainted with methods for preserv-

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamane AZ2
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ing edible matter ; furthermore, they don't care to take the trouble as food is generally plentiful. We must also realize that they find salt repulsive. Even honey – so easily kept for many months – is disposed of, if possible, on the very same day it is collected. Incredible quantities of this or other food may be consumed for days and nights on end until everything disappears. Very few of the islanders care to vary their meat diet with an occasional diet of vegetables in order to disintoxicate the system ; yet nourishing yams and other roots grow wild and plentiful. They are so rich in carbohydrates that I preferred them to potatoes and rice. I may add that the Onge, on my request, brought me yams and roots that they were glad to barter with rice, tea and sugar – soon declared by their wise men to possess medicinal properties.

The Onge's stomach, intestines and general physiological equilibrium suffer from lack of salt and such bad nutritional habits as those described. They damage the human body, together with unrestrained sexual activity.

One highly unhygienic custom of the Onge is the use, all over Little Andaman, of peculiar sucking-sticks. These pass from mouth to mouth during the frequent meat or honey orgies indulged in by the natives.

When boiling pork or turtle, a quantity of liquid fat floats on the surface of the broth. Though the Onge despise the broth, they don't like to waste the fat. So they devised an efficient solution : they suck the fat up by means of a wad of absorbent matter obtained by chewing the end of a fibrous stick selected among many species of trees in the forest. The end of the stick is chewed along a section of 5 cms, the remaining part – about 25 cms long and 2 cms thick – is used as a handle to prevent the fingers from burning.

In every Onge camp sucking-sticks are permanently in evidence owing to the inmates' frequent ingestion of liquid fat or honey. A second version of the sucking-stick consists in a narrow, cotton-like strip, up to 80 cms long, with only a small part of the original wood remaining. This serves as a handle for dipping the stick into a wooden barrel full of honey. In both instances the same tool passes for hours from mouth to mouth ; from older people to greedy children, anxious to suck the coveted delicacy off the stick that has been dipped into the pot. The rapid spreading of epidemics, which often occur in the Andamans, is certainly encouraged by the use of these sucking-sticks. I found no reference to this practice in books on the Andaman Islands.

Everything they eat, particularly meat, the Onge consider as either remedial or harmful. They are therefore chary of accepting proffered food if it is unknown to them. When I brought 30 Onge to Port Blair to introduce them to Dr. RAJENDRA PRASAD, President of the Indian Republic, they were troublesome about food. In Port Blair it was not as easy as in Little Andaman to procure whole pigs ; sometimes only pieces were available. The Andamanese Forest Department was quickly informed of the difficulty and kindly supplied the desired animals. In moments of shortage I tried to give the Onge cooked lamb, goat, chicken and pigeons ; they resolutely refused them as unhealthy. Birds are never eaten by the Onge, who consider them shelters for human souls

6: Cipriani E-5 (1951-1953)1961 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
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262 immense quantities of it together with pork. I was with them three times when this recurred, so I could observe their behaviour exhaustively. With their
517 bellies full, the natives rest. Their only activity is body painting, performed by
302 the women on the skin of their peacefully sleeping husbands. Designs change
178 from time to time as I said before, according to the women's inventiveness. Each family challenges the others in renewing their patterns. The best are later reproduced until the next change. From year to year I noticed no real evolution in this rudimentary art, but a cyclical fashion, with temporary preference, in males and females alike, for some geometrical designs, unconnected with whatever kind of food they had been eating. This contradicts the published af-
114 firmations of several authors, who allege that the Andamanese paint special
302 patterns in special colours for different kinds of food. There is nothing more
[262] false, at least with reference to the Onge. Merry feasting, whether on pork
[751] turtle, dugong, fish or honey, leads to a period of rest and body decoration –
[515] always in similar patterns and colours – with the unique purpose of preventing illness. We might say that painting the body is equal to cleaning it, but this is quite unintentional. A curious exception to the Onge's filthy habits is the
264 practice of sweeping the floor after solemn banquets in communal huts. The
356 surface of the floor consists of unpacked earth hardened by casual tramping.
342 When it is dry, sweeping raises a heavy dust that fills the hut to the ceiling.
251 It deposits there on the wooden beams where the Onge like to store cooked
262 victuals. So they eat their food, as I said before, coated with dust, no matter
412 how thick. A brush without a handle is used to sweep the floor ; it is 80 cms long and no thicker than a man's wrist. It is one of the nicest tools made by the Onge, and consists of strong, hard, elastic palm fibres bound together with
356 strips of rattan. The dirt is simply thrown out all around the hut, by pushing it under the roof mats that never reach the ground.

114 These notes offer a first glimpse into a peculiar aspect of Onge life. It is to be deplored that these vanishing people have not yet been exhaustively studied, notwithstanding their anthropological interest and high biological significance.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge

CHAPTER IX
ABORIGINAL POPULATION

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Communal dinner of the Onges (Courtesy A. S. I.)

[facing P. 62]

much assistance in this respect, as the muscular insertions are exaggerated in both sexes, both being subjected to continued physical effort resulting in muscular bulk.

One quite outstanding physical feature in the Onges is their teeth. The palate is unusually arched, unlike that of the African pygmies or the Bushmen. The teeth, which are never filed or cut, as many primitive peoples do for decorative purposes, are very white; caries is rare, and although never cleaned the teeth are retained till late in life. A common abnormality is that the lateral incisors are as pointed as the canines. This, with the whiteness of the teeth and eyes against the blackness of the skin, gives the Onges a sinister appearance, which may account for the old description of the Andamanese as men with ferocious dogs' heads. The only (summary) cleaning the Onge teeth receive is the use of toothpicks, thinner and rather longer than the European variety and made from the tough, flexible bark of a certain reed. After use, they are carefully thrust into the hair for future occasions. Every Onge has one or more threaded through the hair on top of the head.

The strength of the Onge teeth enables their owners to champ their way through what are for us inconceivable quantities of food, both animal and vegetable, which is chewed slowly and determinedly, dust, earth, sand and all, and then swallowed without apparent ill effects, other than the flatulence arising from overconsumption of animal matter. But the Onges use their teeth for other purposes besides eating. In time the teeth become worn down by the inevitable grinding of dirt and grit, but this does not prevent the Onges from continuing to chew the bark of trees and cords, which is a lifelong occupation. This duty falls mainly on the women, and I have seen aged women, their teeth worn almost to the gums, doggedly chewing bark as their contribution to the communal life of the group. The strength of the teeth is unbelievable – I have seen children of ten to fifteen years crush nails up to two millimetres thick, and dent lumps of iron.

I myself once had good cause to be grateful for their power. My party and I found ourselves stranded in the forest on South Brother without guns or even knives, and without cooking utensils. There were large clutches of turtle eggs buried in the sand nearby and my two Onge companions pointed out a coconut tree loaded with nuts (which turned out to be the only one on the islands, seeded

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

their fires beside them. On the night of 4–5 April 1953, while I was sleeping with them in the communal hut at Berié-Abdalù a sudden storm drenched us all, forcing us to huddle together round fires under the more waterproof parts of the roof. Numb with cold, but cheerful, they began joking, singing[1] and dancing, men and women separately; this went on all night, and no one suffered any ill effects from the soaking.

The Onge lack of hygiene extends also to their cooking utensils, which are never washed. In recent years the ocean has provided the Onges with a generous and unexpected gift; currents running from the south of Asia have thrown up on to the shores of Little Andaman a shoal of empty petrol drums, stout metal cylinders 1·3 metres high and eighty centimetres in diameter. The astute Onges have patiently divided each one in two, each section big enough to take a large pig. Set on big fires these serve as wonderful cooking pots, and the Onges are delighted with them. Unfortunately, however, although they were thrown up all round the island, the supply is beginning to dry up, and they are rapidly being eaten away by rust.

To boil food, the Onges set the drums on two large logs, laid parallel, with a fire between them. Stones are rarely used to support the drums, although there are plenty about in the interior of the island. On the coast, and for a fair way inland, there is nothing but coral, hard but liable when it gets hot to disintegrate under the heavy weight of the cylinders filled to the brim.

In these gifts from the sea the Onges could prepare tasty broths, but they invariably allow nearly all the water to boil away, and the cooking process is not considered complete until all the liquid has gone. While it is boiling, however, they take care not to lose the fat floating on the top, which they adore. They have even invented a curious sort of dipping-stick for the purpose of skimming the fat off. They take a shoot about twenty centimetres long from a plant which disintegrates into fibre when chewed. One end is chewed into a loose 'brush' and no one present misses his turn to dip it into the pot again and again to skim off a mouthful of fat, even getting up in the night in their eagerness for it. One stick naturally does for everyone, men, women and children, the

[1] The Onge voice is not markedly different from the European. It has a musical quality, fairly high-pitched but never shrill; the Onges never raise their voices, even in anger – disagreements invariably end in a dignified silence.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

mothers offering it to the waiting children one after another in strict order. This alone would be enough to explain the spread of the devastating measles epidemics which can attack every member of a hut.

While they love the liquid fat, they despise the broth left behind, and once the meat has been eaten, a thick yellowish soup, not unpleasant, is left in the drum. The dogs love this, and rush for it, putting their paws right into the drum, fighting and snarling in their eagerness to get at it. When they have finished licking, the drum is shining clean and ready for use, with no washing up to do! Clouds of flies descend on the drums, packing into a black swarm all over the bottom and sides, eager to finish off the dogs' work. Sea or river water is often only a yard or two from camp, but no one would dream of washing anything.

Once the meat or fish is cooked, it is often hung in the roof of the hut, out of reach of the dogs. The fact that the roof is dusty and covered in spiders to foul the meat, does not matter; earth and sand get in the way of the teeth, dust and spiders do not. The Onges happily eat contaminated flesh and drink water from pools in which animal carcasses are rotting or dogs are bathing and drinking; the dogs share literally everything with their masters.

On my visits to the island I always had to fence off the wells I had dug out, to avoid a constant battle with the dogs. I always found water only a few metres down, and the dogs revelled in it. In the east, near Nachuge, I saw Onges and dogs together avidly drinking in brackish pools which stank of sulphur, although I must confess that after repeated filtration and boiling the water lost its smell and I was myself able to use it without any ill effects. My men thought it was good for the health to drink it as it was.

During all Onge orgies, and particularly the honey feasts, there is, if possible, even less regard for hygiene. Although the honey is full of wax, larvae, and a few odd bees, their brush-stick only picks up the honey itself. They have another even better way of getting out the honey. A strip of bark about one metre long and as wide as the palm of the hand is taken from a *Ficus*. This is well chewed to make it pliable, and when this is dipped into the honey mixture it emerges dripping with pure honey. Everyone bites at it avidly, young and old, men, women and children, one after another, to the last drop.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

tide goes down, the shoals are caught in the reefs stretching out to sea all round the island and the Onges leave everything to manhandle the canoes from pool to pool and fill them to overflowing. The water is almost saturated with fish, and the Onges go on and on until they have nothing more they can use to hold the catch. Nowhere else in the world have I seen anything like this wholesale slaughter.

The pilchards of the Andamans are rather larger than usual, some weighing as much as half a kilogram or more. The Onges catch them regardless of size and then sort them into lengths before cooking (cooking, needless to say, without stopping to gut them). Men, women and children work feverishly, plunging their hands into the heaving mass of fish so that they reek of it for days, together with the dogs, whose coats become the inevitable handtowels.

Every available vessel is used for the cooking, and the rest of the haul is cooked directly over hot ashes. The biggest are cooked alone; the smaller ones, in batches of half to one kilogram, are wrapped in big fleshy leaves, tied up with vegetable fibres and cooked for ten minutes or so, turned regularly all the while. To boil the fish, an entire netful of fish roughly equal in size is plunged into boiling water, and boiled as usual far too long for our taste.

Everyone cooks and eats at the same time until (temporarily) unable to eat any more, when the rest of the haul is laid on improvised racks with fires of green wood making smoke underneath. When, a few days later, all is gone, fishing begins again. And so life goes on for weeks, until the shoals have passed the islands.

The real fishing, however, is done by the men. The women use small nets about fifty centimetres in diameter, and about the same depth. The opening consists of a pliable cane, barely three centimetres in diameter, bent into a circle and tied with the ends crossing each other and projecting about twenty centimetres to form the handles. Each woman handles two nets, one held between the legs and the other in one hand, while the other hand pokes with a stick into the crevices in the reefs under the water to drive out the fish which have taken refuge as the tide goes out. Once found the fish are killed – very simply, by biting them between the